

## Rev. William Scafe

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by S Lloyd

THE Rev. WILLIAM SCAFE was born at Heywood, near Rochdale, December 11, 1848, and when quite young removed with his parents to Darton, near Barnsley. In the Grammar-school of that village he received his education. Chiefly through the influence of his pious mother, while he was still a youth, he was led to accept Christ as his Saviour. The leaders of the church at once recognised the talents of the young convert, and utilized them for the work of God.

At the age of fourteen he became a local preacher, and devoted himself with much care to preparation for his public services. Even at that age, he saw that a preacher must not only prepare his sermon by careful study, but secure also personal preparation by sincere consecration in private devotions. His efforts at once won attention, and much strain was placed upon his youthful nature by those who appreciated his ability. Having received an appointment to the Post Office at Barnsley, he removed to that town, and resided for some time with Mr, John Glover, the respected Circuit Steward, While here he made the acquaintance of the Revs. T. Mitchell and T. Markwell, and was brought into contact with a number of godly people, who aided him in the development of his mental and spiritual life.

He speedily won the respect of the postmaster and the officials, and by his intelligence and painstaking attention to his duties made promotion a certainty. The postmaster in after years, when he had retired from his office, frequently spoke to the writer of this article, of the glowing prospects of Mr. Scafe during the time he served in the postal department. The brightness of worldly prospects, however, could not make our departed friend deaf to the call of God and the church to devote himself to the work of the ministry.

His first appointment was to the Durham Circuit, where he was specially favoured in having as superintendent of the circuit, the saintly and successful minister of Christ—Rev. Joseph Spoor. The influences which such a godly man exerted over the youthful preacher were of the truest and most helpful kind, and they greatly assisted in forming the character, and shaping the future, of his ministerial life. His sorrowing and afflicted widow is a daughter of the sainted Mr. Spoor. Mr. Scafe speedily surrounded himself with true and admiring friends. The warm-hearted, intelligent inhabitants of Durham and the neighbourhood crowded to hear the wise eloquence of their young minister. The writer has heard some of them say, 'He looked like a boy, but he preached like a man of experience.' There was truth in this, for Mr. Scafe's intelligence and power of sympathy were in advance of his years, and his skill in effective composition, joined with a powerful memory, enabled him to give forth with ease and force what had been carefully thought and realised previously. His early death may chiefly be attributed to the fact, that he projected his mind and spirit with such keenness into the work of solving the mysteries and shaping the course of human life, that his physical nature was too weak to stand the strain. The scabbard could not long hold the bright and trenchant blade.

When he returned to his native district, on leaving Durham, he was located in the Leeds 2nd Circuit; and while there he was called upon to pass through an affliction that sapped the sources of his strength, and left him afterwards weak and suffering. For several weeks he hovered between life and death. During this affliction he gained new power to sympathize with others, as well as increased mental and moral fitness for his great work. With an enfeebled constitution Mr. Scafe recommenced the work of the ministry, and by dint of perseverance and sacrifice, laboured in the Horbury, Otley, Leeds 3rd, Leeds 6th, and Lavender Hill Circuits.

Everywhere he has left behind him a bright and noble record of service. Old men speak of him and his work with delight and esteem, and young men, now leading officials of the churches, dilate in glowing and affectionate terms on his sympathetic counsel and fellowship. While in the Leeds 3rd Circuit he was brought into loving association with the late venerable Rey. G. Lamb, and with the Revs. G. Warner and S. Griffiths, all of whom held him in the highest esteem, while laymen like W. Beckworth, Esq., J. Harrison, Esq., and others, regarded his friendship as a very precious thing. These were some of his happiest days, for though suffering greatly at times, he was surrounded by a circle of ministerial friends, who still lovingly remember the seasons of brightness and gladness they spent with him.

When the Leeds 3rd Circuit was divided, and the Leeds 6th Circuit was formed, Mr. Scafe was chosen Superintendent, and continued to labour for two years longer, until failing health necessitated his removal to a still smaller station. For seven years he ministered in the Lavender Hill Station, London. During a portion of this time he had regularly on Sundays the inmates of the Ladies' College among his congregation, and now many of them speak of the earnest words and kind sympathy of the pastor. The Rev. W. Rowe said in his address at the memorial service, held in Grayshott Road church: 'For seven years Mr. Scafe has laboured amongst us in word and doctrine,—yes, laboured, for owing to the delicate state of his health, very frequently the discharge of his pastoral duties was a most laborious effort. Often has he paid pastoral visits when he should have been resting. Not unfrequently has he gone from the sick couch to the pulpit. And yet with all his feeble health, how much work did he accomplish! Not content with his ordinary ministerial duties, he frequently worked for periodicals, and to some of them he was a constant contributor, and his contributions were highly valued by their conductors. As a pastor and preacher he excelled. His loving spirit, deep sympathy, and gentle manners and words, always made him a welcome visitor to the afflicted. Some of us who have stood or kneeled by the death-bed of loved ones, cannot forget his ministrations of love and consolation, nor the prayers he has offered. And what prayers! So rich in holy confidence, so full of tenderness, so felicitous in language! The sweet and profitable memories of them linger with us still.'

He excelled, also, in the art of giving suitable spiritual instruction to those who met in the classes. A lady in his Thursday night class, supplied at the memorial service the following beautiful and touching testimony on this point:—

'One group of mourners in this congregation is peculiarly bereaved by the departure into the unseen, of our beloved friend and minister. It is composed of those who used to meet him for Christian leading and advice on Thursday evenings, at the close of those short, but beautiful addresses, so patiently and carefully prepared for his week-night hearers. When the vestry-door closed behind him as he entered our midst, the worldly spirit seemed to be shut out, and his personal reverence and devotion touched us all. As one of those who for the last four years of his London ministry shared the great privilege of this group of hearers, I speak with confidence of his surpassing fitness to give spiritual advice. His method was varied. On one night he would speak first, and then we all listened to breathings of the spirit of devotion and aspiration, of humility and faith, which led us into the secret of his patient life, and lofty public sayings. On another night his glance from one to another was all that was needed to give the most timid speaker confidence, and encourage him to expect the most grave and earnest attention to his hesitating utterances. Some nights he interpolated a quiet word or two amidst those of others, and these short remarks betrayed his strong sympathy, and his rare insight into other's needs. Even when he sat exhausted and silent, yet listening, his influence was scarcely less than when he summed-up the too-short hour of service in a prayer of wondrous power—touching on every need, remembering, recalling, rewording every doubt, every fear, every cause of rejoicing which his patient listening, or ardent sympathy—both in and out of the class-room—evoked from those who looked to him for help in Christ-like living. The hidden life of the Christian was the only thing that could account for the influence gained by our minister over his

class, some members of which never missed meeting him on Thursday nights under any but the gravest circumstances, and who now look forward to the renewal of such intercourse, as one of the brightest joys which the future holds for us. We cannot doubt that he is holding high and rapt communion with heaven's noblest spirits; we rejoice in the communion of saints, through which he and we can join in one worship still; and the hope of again taking counsel together is one of our strongest aspirations. To us, if to no others, "he," truly, "yet speaketh."

The demands made upon the ministry of our church are known only to those who have entered upon it. But Mr. Scafe endeavoured to the utmost of his strength to meet them. At the time of his death he was serving the Connexion in a variety of ways. When too feeble to preach, he wrote sermons and articles for the magazines, and thus spoke to a larger audience than could be accommodated within the walls of his church. He was secretary of the Superannuated Preachers', Widows', and Orphans' Fund, a member of the General Committee, and General Committee Delegate to the District Meeting. And for these offices he was eminently fitted. He was observant of all religious questions, and had an accurate knowledge of Connexional rules and usages. His memory was most retentive and capacious; everything he read or heard seemed to be stored carefully away, where he could at once find it when it was needed,

The estimate formed of Mr. Scafe by others, outside our own church, may be learnt from the following testimonies. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A., Editor of the *Methodist Times*, in noticing the decease of our brother, said: - 'We deeply regret to note the death of the Rev. W. Scafe. Mr. Scafe was one of the most gifted, devout, and distinguished of the ministers of the Primitive Methodist church. He was a much appreciated correspondent of this journal, and we had hoped to secure his valued co-operation to a yet greater degree. His comparatively early death is a great blow to universal Methodism, and it deprives earnest, genial, aggressive Christianity of one of its most promising advocates. The only consolation is to remember that our loss is his infinite gain.'

The writer in the *Christian World*, to which week by week Mr. Scafe contributed, says:— 'His preaching was on a high and exalted plane, ever tending to enrich, exalt, and ennoble human lives. He took very liberal views of God's truth, and cherished most charitable feelings towards his fellows.'

And this is the testimony of all who knew him. He dealt with topics that enlarged men's views of life, and made them realize not only their relation to God, but the great responsibility, also, which resulted from the relationship; and all his sermons were highly finished literary productions, and in being modelled on correct literary styles, they carried with them corresponding force and loveliness.

His friendship was strong and enduring, and though his numerous duties and weakening afflictions often prevented correspondence with those whom he esteemed, yet they always knew that when they met him he would be the same genial, loving, brotherly man, with a fund of quiet humour, whom they had known and loved in the past.

Mr. Scafe's attachment to the people at Grayshott Road was very strong, and in return they loved him sincerely, and revealed their affection and esteem with a generosity and patience that touched the heart of their pastor very fully. How he longed to give them more service! During the whole time of his ministry among them, he was scarcely ever able to give them the best of himself; yet, though fettered by weakness, and impeded by difficulties, his winning spirit and earnest work made them grapple him tightly to their heart, and to-day their kindly sympathies and deeds are revealed in full blossom. He removed to Hastings, hoping that his enfeebled health would be restored by the change, but he speedily grew worse. His devoted wife, herself suffering keenly, was summoned to his bedside. Under the care of a skilled physician for a time

he rallied, sufficiently to send letters to his friends and officials breathing earnest wishes for their happiness, and hoping soon to see them again. Alas! it was not to be, for before many days had come he passed away to the higher and purer side of life.

His wish to be buried in London, near the church and people he loved, was honoured by his sorrowing widow and congregation, and on the 16th of March, 1887, the church at Grayshott where his voice had so often been heard in appeal and teaching, was filled by those who were met to mourn his early removal from this sphere of service. Mr. Scafe no longer ministers in an earthly temple, but—

‘In white radiance on the golden floor,  
Where love is perfect, and no feet can falter,  
He serveth as a priest for evermore.’

His hopes of earthly service have been smitten, but the fragrance of his work remains. His life is not a failure. His death is only entrance on a freer life. He has been lifted up to the heavenly side of life, where freedom from pain leaves him fitted for the wider ministries of love. The flowers strewn by the loving hands on his coffin and grave have withered, but more enduring memorials flourish and shine with beauty in the white light of the church’s service. The teachings given by him to others who are committing them to the care of the young, and the influences so full of tenderness and strength that he emitted, are blooming with perennial freshness, and will continue to bloom when gravestones have crumbled into dust, and flowers are smitten by the winds and scattered.

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1888/625